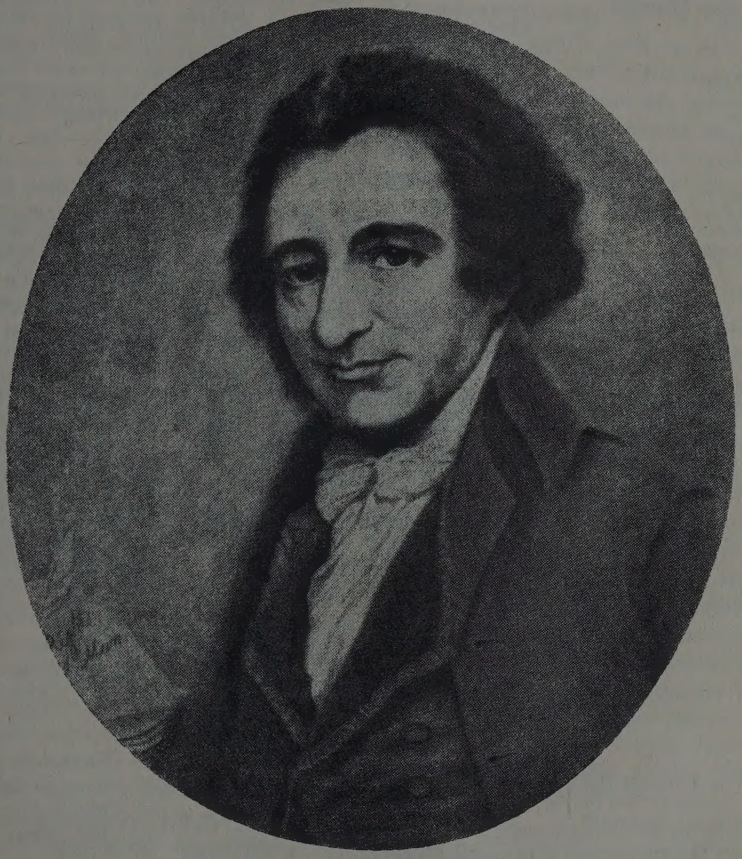
UNITY

FREEDOM, FELLOWSHIP AND CHARACTER IN RELIGION

THOMAS PAINE

1737 - 1809



Thomas Paine

TWO HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY

1737-1937

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The Field

"The world is my country, to do good is my Religion."

In Recognition of Thomas Paine

EDWIN H. WILSON

On the two hundredth anniversary of Thomas Paine, January 29, 1937, there will be unveiled in Paris, a monument by Gutzon Borglum, sponsored by the Freethinkers of America. The list of speakers for the occasion will include Helen Keller, George Bernard Shaw, and others.

J. M. Robertson, writing in the January *Literary Guide*, of London, states that Paine was a Theist. Very often Paine's Freethinker champions have obscured his *deistic* belief in a "Supreme Architect of the Universe." Mr. Robertson is right when he says that, "it is from the Atheists that Paine has won most abundant recognition." Mr. Robertson may also be right when he cites Moncure D. Conway to show that "the Old Unitarians, for twenty-five years continued to draw attention from their own heresies by hounding on the prosecution of Paine's adherents." However, on January 29, 1860, Dr. Conway preached a sermon* in the First Congregational (Unitarian) Church, Cincinnati, Ohio, in commendation of Paine. There are several things of more recent occurrence which show that at least on the part of Unitarian Humanists, Paine is properly recognized.

A number of years ago Dr. Frank S. C. Wicks, minister of the Unitarian Church at Indianapolis placed a bust of Paine in the chancel of his church, which can still be seen there. Rev. John H. Dietrich, of the Unitarian Society at Minneapolis, has in his study a drawing of Paine's home at New Rochelle and has often spoken and written on Paine.

In 1917 Dr. Curtis W. Reese preached a sermon on Thomas Paine in the First Unitarian Church, Des Moines, Iowa, which was later reported in the *Truthseeker*, New York.

On September 21, 1936, in the modern meeting place of the Third Unitarian Church, of Chicago, the Thomas Paine Pulpit was dedicated. So far as we know this is the only pulpit dedicated to the memory of

*See page 196 of this issue.—EDITORS.

(*Continued on page* 200)

UNITY

"He Hath Made of One All Nations of Men"

Volume CXVIII MONDAY, JANUARY 18, 1937 No. 10

THE ARMY OF DELIVERANCE

Through all the centuries gone, the mind of man has been beleaguered by the mailed hosts of superstition. Slowly and painfully has advanced the army of deliverance. Hated by those they wished to rescue, despised by those they were dying to save, these grand soldiers, these immortal deliverers, have fought without thanks, labored without applause, suffered without pity, and they have died execrated and abhorred. For the good of mankind they accepted isolation, poverty, and calumny. They gave up all, sacrificed all, lost all but truth and self-respect.

—Robert G. Ingersoll.

A REGIMENT FOR SPAIN!

The announcement of the Socialist Party that it proposes to raise $50,000 to arm and equip a brigade of soldiers—artillerists and ballistic experts preferred!—to fight on the Madrid front for the Loyalists is disturbing news. It seems an outrage on the record of the Socialist Party's consistent opposition to war, and a profanation, an act of sacrilege, when it is proposed to describe this fighting unit as the "Eugene V. Debs Battalion." Could there be any more dreadful evidence of the collapse of pacifist conviction in the face of another mania for war? There must be one more war, apparently, to end war—one more war to make the world safe for democracy—one more war to save civilization—as though it had not been proved, at the expense of millions of lives lost and billions of property destroyed, that war can and will do none of these things! What failed so tragically in France in 1914 will fail with equal tragedy in Spain in 1937. The argument of our Socialist friends is that this war in Spain is not an international war but a class war—not capitalist power against capitalist power, but workers against Fascists. More particularly, it is the people and their republic in Spain against the monarchists and imperialists and ecclesiastics who would destroy the republic and re-enslave the people. This analysis, if true, would win the sympathy of us all; insofar as it has been true, we have been for the Loyalist cause. But, if ever true, it is so no longer! The Spanish fight today is not a fight between republicans and monarchists, the government and the rebels; it is not even a fight between the Spanish workers and their oppressors. Openly and shamelessly this fight is now a duel between Communists and Fascists, with Moscow appropriating and controlling the Loyalist cause, and Berlin and Rome in charge of the Fascist cause. As between the two, we are all for the Communists—but that is not the question! The issue now facing us is whether America is going to take up arms in a war between Russia and Germany for the mastery of Europe, as twenty years ago it took up arms in a similar war between Britain and Germany. We would not participate in any war—we are pacifist still! But, even though we were not pacifist in any absolutist sense, we would oppose any attempt to drag America into another European war. The Socialist Party's move is a first step which should be stopped before it is taken.

WHAT TO DO IN SPAIN

Not to go in and fight! This seems to us so obvious as to need no argument. But not to turn away and hug ourselves in selfish isolation—this seems to us also to be obvious! Insofar as the Spanish war remains in any sense a struggle for the republic and the interests of free democracy it represents, as over against the outrageous and sinister uprising of militarists and Fascists, the loyalists, or republicans, deserve our sympathy and all that such sympathy may righteously involve. As an attempt to analyze the situation and to define a course of action, we have seen nothing better than a set of resolutions, published in the current *Standard,* as presented to the annual Assembly of the American Ethical Union meeting in St. Louis in November last. These resolutions were not adopted—why, we do not know!—but referred by the Assembly to the various Ethical Culture Societies in the country "for their study." We publish the resolutions herewith for the benefit of our readers:

A fellowship such as that of the Ethical Movement, which says that the basis of religion is ethics; that every human being has the right to life and to the fullest development of which he is capable; that every nation has the right to its life and the development of its own culture toward greater freedom; and which holds that other nations have the responsibility to honor that culture,—cannot ignore world events in recent years, and in particular the present crisis in Spain.

Whereas the Spanish people have emerged from a semi-feudal state into the light of contemporary democratic standards and ideals;

Whereas they have been defending and fighting for the liberties which we fought for one hundred and fifty years ago;

Whereas on February 16, 1936, in a legal and constitutional election, administered by a conservative or right-centre government, the Popular Front won a majority of the seats in the Cortes;

Whereas this Popular Front Government represented a vote in no sense extreme, of which at least half was Liberal, and whose program was moderate; and finally

Whereas an attack by force, engineered by reactionary groups, monarchists, nobility, feudal land-holders, the Church and the army, and carried through under military leadership, with the help of Moors and foreign legionnaires, and assisted through the summer months by foreign powers,—constitutes one more serious attempt to defeat and destroy democracy;

Therefore, the delegates to the Annual Assembly of the American Ethical Union wish to point out to the members of the Ethical Movement and to the general public:

(1) The desperate plight of the civilian population in Spain, women and children in particular, their suffering from wounds, bombardment, famine and epidemic,—the fact of human need;

(2) The obligation to help by sending medical aid, food, and clothing to all sufferers, and especially to those who have suffered in defence of democracy against militarized, foreign, and Fascist aggression;

(3) The need for a moral protest by all peoples, and by the American people in particular, with greater force and effectiveness than was expressed against Fascist aggression in Manchuria by Japan and in Ethiopia by Italy;

(4) The re-assertion of our faith in the democratic process, and our conviction that the United States government should withhold recognition of any régime established by extra-legal or military force against democracy;

(5) The need to re-examine the fundamental issues which bear on the defeat of democracy in country after country since the World War and their ethical implications.

"BROTHER, CAN YOU SPARE A DIME?"

The unofficial visit of the British delegation to take up new discussion of the war debts, and to sound out possibilities of coöperation between Great Britain and the United States in the next war, is an infinitely touching thing. For years, now, the British government has not paid so much as a copper penny on the war debts owed to the American government. On recent pay-days, Britain has not even apologized or explained—just said nothing! In recent budgets, the chancellor of the exchequer has not even set down the figures—just dropped them out as though they did not exist! If you want your money, has been the implication, come over and get it—if you can. All of which is a nice situation, for the British—that is, if you discount this old-fashioned thing called "honor!" But now another war is looming darkly on the horizon. The Empire is feverishly preparing for this war, and preparation of course means not only ships and planes and tanks and bombs, but also and very particularly money. Where is money to be had in this war if not from America as in the last war? Also, how more surely get America into this next war, as into the last war, than to persuade her to invest her shekels on the right side, which of course will be the English side? But how can America be persuaded to loan more money for a new war when the money already loaned on the old war has not been paid back? That's more than can be expected even from Uncle Sam! So—*so*—an English delegation is soon to arrive here to talk things over. They want to find out how we feel about those debts—as though there were more than one way to feel about debts which a rich debtor is not even trying to pay! They desire to open up the question of paying a portion at least of those debts—on condition, O, yes, *on condition* that we promise to pay the payments right back again as new loans in the next war. A very kind suggestion, to be sure! Will Uncle Sam fall for it? The proposal offers a good test of the old gentleman's possible feeble-mindedness. If he is as shrewd as he himself believes, he will answer—Pay what you owe me, and, if there's another war, pay your own way!

COLONIES AND PEACE

There is a lot of talk in Germany these days about the return of the colonies seized from Germany at Versailles. The fact that this talk is linked up with the disastrous economic situation in the Reich has lent substance to the surmise that the recovery of these colonies is necessary to German life. The Germans assert this, and the rest of us believe it in view of the multiplying signs of distress in the Fatherland. But this connection between colonies and industrial economy is questionable. There are good reasons in politics and justice why the German colonies should be returned—their seizure was a part of the iniquity of the peace treaties! But economic reasons are flimsy stuff. The colonies were never central to the industrial life of the Kaiser's Germany, and they are not central in any sense to Hitler's Germany. The whole doctrine of exclusive control of undeveloped colonial territories as a source of national prosperity is unsound, as Grover Clark has abundantly demonstrated in two recent volumes. Now comes a report of the Advisory Council of the National Peace Council in England, signed, among others, by Professor Harold Laski and Sir George Paish, emphasizing this same conclusion. Germany wants her colonies back, says this report, for political and psychological effect. This policy is aimed to soothe discontented minds, not feed hungry stomachs. What is fundamental to the whole economic problem is not the colonial system at all, but equal access to raw materials on the part of all the nations of the earth. The report of the National Peace Council calls for an International Convention to provide such access, to accelerate the free movement of goods, to abolish discrimination in immigration, and to establish in all colonies an educational mandate system to expedite self-government. The present policy of a fear-mad world is nationalism of the most intense description—each nation setting itself up as a self-sufficient economic entity behind prohibitive tariff barriers and menacing armament defenses. Such policy is crazy, and in the end utterly destructive. Nothing can save the world but the internationalization of resources, trade, transit, currency, and government.

WHAT'S GOING ON IN GERMANY?

We have referred above to the reports of economic distress in Germany. What's going on in that country? Nobody really knows, least of all the German people. Certain facts, however, are obvious. The most conspicuous is the food shortage, more particularly fats. Another is the shortage of raw materials for manufacture, due to lack of foreign currency. Tightening

restrictions upon the daily life of the citizens, even to official instructions not to throw bread crusts away, indicate a certain desperation upon the part of the government. Speculation is of course running rife as to the outcome of what seems to be a genuine crisis, with forecasts varying from internal collapse and chaos to a foreign war, or hazardous adventure abroad, to cover up the confusion at home. Our guess is that nothing decisive will happen, at least not yet. This whole experience was gone through by the Russians under even worse conditions, and the government was not particularly disturbed. It is true that the Russians have no such standards of life as the Germans. But hunger is hunger, and in extremities of deprivation standards do not count. Furthermore, the Germans are a highly disciplined people, long trained to utter dependence upon the state. And also it is to be remembered that Hitler has a terroristic hold upon the situation every whit as great as that held by Stalin in Russia. No, outbreak in Germany is as unlikely as it would be difficult. The chances are that there will be written one more chapter of the old story of "tightening the belt." All depends upon psychology—which is another interesting phenomenon to commend to the attention of our economic determinists! The Russians in their days of queues and ration cards were thoroughly infected with the idea that they were making heroic sacrifices for the new Russia and the better day. The Reich has infected its people with somewhat the same patriotic-Utopian mania. As long as Hitler can maintain this morale, he will have little trouble. His proclamation some weeks ago about submarines and bread was an endeavor to this end. But there comes a *finale* to this kind of thing. Russia got by. But will Germany succeed as well? Upon this issue hang momentous consequences to mankind.

FRANCIS GREENWOOD PEABODY—FAREWELL!

There is no nobler phrase in the English language than "gentleman and scholar." There was no man in the range of our acquaintanceship who more richly deserved this phrase as descriptive of his character than Dr. Peabody. He was a "gentleman" to his finger-tips, dowered with all the graces of dignity and honor. Born of Brahmin stock and Puritan blood, he belied by his kindliness, open-mindedness, generosity, and genuine democracy, as well as by his exquisite sensibility to beauty as a central part of truth, the vulgar slanders visited so commonly and ignorantly upon the spiritual aristocracy of this land. As a "scholar," Dr. Peabody was eminent through two full and fruitful generations at Harvard University. He here functioned in three capacities—as preacher, teacher, and prophet. As preacher, in the college chapel and elsewhere, he glorified the pulpit as the artist in thought and word. He delivered a sermon as a painter painted a picture. Whether miniatures, like the morning chapel talks, or great canvases, like some of the historic conference discourses, his sermons were artistic masterpieces of form and content. No preacher of his time had such mastery of design and color. And when he prayed, the prayer seemed to outdo the sermon in flawless beauty! As teacher, Dr. Peabody offered in the university courses in the social sciences which were epoch-making in their time. He was a pioneer in laying social problems and conditions under ethical inspection and therewith bringing the dynamic of morals to the scientific study of reform. At the same time, in the Divinity School, Dr. Peabody taught a generation of students in homiletics, in which department of theology he ranked as incomparably the greatest teacher of his day. We doubt if any man ever imparted higher discipline or riper wisdom. Lastly, as prophet, Dr. Peabody was notable for his preaching and practice of the social gospel. His famous book, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question,* broke new ground. His work must forever be remembered with that of Washington Gladden, Josiah Strong, Shailer Mathews, and Walter Rauschenbusch as opening a new era of Christian idealism. And now this gentleman and scholar is dead at eighty-nine years of age! He outlived most of his own generation, but was a vital influence in the generation that followed, and thus will be widely mourned, as he was deeply loved. His memory succeeds his presence as a benediction.

Jottings

Following our report in the last issue of the famous dead of 1936, there died before the New Year date—Simeon Fess, former Republican Senator from Ohio; Dr. Francis G. Peabody, Unitarian minister and scholar; Arthur Brisbane, journalist; Clive Weed, cartoonist; Irene Fenwick, actress; and General Hans von Steeck, German soldier.

Lloyd George has deplored to his late king the "shabby" way in which he (the king) was treated by his ministers. Well, Lloyd George ought to know, for he is an expert in shabbiness. His treatment of his cabinet chief, Mr. Asquith, in forcing his abdication as premier in 1916, is probably the shabbiest thing ever done in English public life.

Reno last year had two-and-a-half times as many marriages as divorces. Is divorce a menace to marriage? If these figures mean anything, divorce is the fertilizer which grows the more abundant crop.

"Berle Sees War Threat"
—Headline in New York *Times*.

My! My! This man must have miraculously acute eyesight!

Spain is the latest acid test to show how superficial is the pacifism of many of our pacifists. Again, as in 1914, they are dropping away one by one into the war camp. We must have one more war, apparently, to make the world safe for democracy—or is it one more war to end war? The new brood of pacifist-militarists should hurry and make up their minds.

At last—*at last!* After all these years of struggle and endeavor, we have secured recognition, renown, fame, glory, splendor. Yes, this fall our picture was displayed in a photographer's window!

J. H. H.

Thomas Paine: 1737-1937

JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

Thomas Paine was born in Thetford, England, on January 29, 1737. His father was a Quaker, a stay-maker by profession, industrious, faithful, but very poor. One of the most delightful episodes in Paine's story is the warm affection which always endured between the father and the son. Thomas received little education, went to work at his father's bench at thirteen, ran away to sea at nineteen, settled down at twenty-one as a master staymaker at Sandwich, Kent, and the next year married his first wife. Then followed years of failure, unhappiness, and misfortune. Gamaliel Bradford speaks of him as "drenched for nearly forty years in English obscurity and penury." When he entered his thirty-seventh year, Paine had lost two wives, one by death and one by separation; he had run two businesses into bankruptcy; he had entered the excise service, and been discharged. At this comparatively late age Thomas Paine was practically penniless and had no prospects for the future.

One thing, however, Paine had achieved. He had made some friends—among them Benjamin Franklin, Oliver Goldsmith, and David Williams. It was Franklin who marked the turning point of his life by advising him to go to America, and giving him letters of introduction to influential men. Whether Franklin saw in Paine evidences of genius not apparent in his record, and "was keenly alive," as one biographer puts it, "to America's need of just such a spirit as Thomas Paine," or whether he was simply acting on the general principle that for a man who has been a failure a new start is a good thing, nobody can say. We simply know that Paine set sail for America in October, 1774, and arrived in America on the thirtieth of November. With a new world began a new life which seems to have no imaginable connection with anything that had gone before. This life divides itself easily into three parts, each one of which, curiously enough, is located in a different country, and is marked by the publication of an immortal work which turned the world upside down.

The first period lasts from the latter part of 1774, when Paine went to live in Philadelphia, to April, 1787, when he sailed for England. The book which glorifies this period is *Common Sense*.

Within six months after his arrival in America, Paine found himself in the midst of an armed revolt against the British crown. In a little over a year, he had published his pamphlet and had become overnight one of the leading men among the revolutionists. Although the son of a Quaker, and although the pen was obviously his appointed weapon, Paine was not to be deterred from bearing his share of the perils and dangers of the hour. So he enlisted in the continental army, and was soon appointed to the staff of General Nathaniel Greene. In this capacity, he participated in the great retreat through New York and New Jersey; and it was when the military situation was the darkest that he wrote on a drum-head, by the light of a camp-fire, the first of his series of little pamphlets, called *The Crisis*. More than any other influence of the time, these pamphlets instructed the common people as to the meaning of the struggle they were in, and kept up their courage to continue that struggle to the end. What Washington did with his sword, what Patrick Henry did with his voice, what Benjamin Franklin did with his tact and diplomacy, that Thomas Paine did with his eloquent and valiant pen. A lesser man than any one of these great leaders of the patriot cause, his work was no less potent to the end of liberty which they all were seeking. In any impartial judgment of the issue, Thomas Paine must rank high among the makers of that nation, whose name, the "United States of America," he was the first to use.

The second period of Paine's life begins with his return to England in 1787, and lasts until his departure for France in September, 1792. The book, which was the storm-center of this period, was *The Rights of Man*, published in two parts in 1791 and 1792 respectively.

Paine's reason for leaving America, just on the eve of the great Constitutional Convention, was a personal one. He desired to see his father, of whom he was very fond and who was now well advanced in years. It was his intention to stay not more than a year in England, and then resume his life in the new country which was his across the seas. But Paine was now an international figure, and it was impossible for him to remain in domestic obscurity in his father's home. Almost immediately he found himself caught up into that radical political movement which had swept into England in the wake of the American Revolution, and which was destined to sweep on, amid innumerable vicissitudes, to the final great triumphs of democracy a half-century later. Furthermore, within a year after his arrival the great Revolution broke out in France. The first result in England was an immense outburst of popular enthusiasm for the cause of liberty. Poets joined with the man in the street in lifting the paean of rejoicing. It looked for a time as though a revolt was under way which might lead to the establishment of a republic after the pattern of the United States. Paine was in his element. He saw work to his hand identical with that which he had achieved with such memorable results in America. He had dethroned the king once;

perhaps he could dethrone this same king a second time! He needed only the opportunity to put his pen to paper to set the kingdom aflame.

This opportunity was unexpectedly provided by one of the most distinguished men in England, a statesman who had been friendly to America during the war and had won during that stormy period a great reputation for liberalism. This man was Edmund Burke. It might have been supposed that this great leader would respond to the French Revolution exactly as he had done to the American Revolution, as other leaders of liberal opinion were now doing. When the news of the fall of the Bastille crossed the channel, for example, Charles James Fox exclaimed with exultation that this was the greatest event that had ever happened in the history of the world. "Is it an infirmity to wish for an instant," says John Morley, in his famous biography, "that some such phrase of generous hope had escaped from Burke." But nothing came! On the contrary, Burke was shocked by the events in Paris into a position which "places him," says Morley again, "among the great conservatives of history." And all his conservatism he poured out upon the world in his *Reflections on the French Revolution,* in which he denounced the overturn in France, prophesied its ultimate catastrophe, and rushed to the aid of monarchy as the divinely ordered system of society.

The *Reflections* created an immense stir. Reaction rose to a high pitch, and loudly acclaimed Burke as its inspired prophet. Liberalism, on the other hand, was outraged, and found its prophet in Mirabeau, who lifted his miraculous voice in a denunciation of the English renegade, which went around the world. But an answer must be made in England itself. Burke must be rebuked in his own country, and by one speaking in his own language to his own people. Here was the chance for Thomas Paine, who seized it with an avidity which showed that the revolutionary spirit was still quick within him.

Within a few days after the appearance of Burke's *Reflections,* Paine was busy on his reply. He retired to Islington, a suburb of London, to obtain the privacy and quiet necessary for the writing of so important a work as he was contemplating. Within a few months, he had finished the first part, and published it soon thereafter, under the title, *The Rights of Man.* The second part was finished about a year later, and published on February 17, 1792. In these famous volumes, Paine justified the Revolution, narrating the events which had led up to it and describing the insufferable conditions which had precipitated it. In answer to Burke's sentimentalizing over the unhappy Queen of France, Paine set down his immortal epigram, "He pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird." Then he went on and stated the first principles of human government, defending the rights of people everywhere to establish whatever government they pleased. Lastly, he expounded the theory of democracy, drawing richly from the experience of America, and urged the advantages of a republic "in which the welfare of the whole nation is the object."

The Rights of Man was a sensational success. Within three months the government was alarmed and started prosecutions. Learning that a summons had been issued against his publisher, Jordan, Paine hastened to assure him that he would assume entire responsibility and pay all the expenses of his defense. Hearing a statement of the Home Secretary that proceedings had been taken against Jordan only because the author of the "seditious writing," Thomas Paine, could not be found, Paine wrote immediately to the Attorney-General stating that he was living in the same place where he had been living openly during the entire winter, and that he could be found there whenever wanted. Summoned himself to appear in court on June 8th, Paine was on hand at the appointed hour only to learn that the trial had been postponed until December. At last the case was called and the trial held in the Guildhall, with the great Whig advocate, Thomas Erskine, representing the defendant. Conviction of course was certain, and came in due order. Paine was outlawed, amid furious demonstrations of loyalty to the crown, and *The Rights of Man* suppressed forever in the kingdom.

But the bird had flown long since! Three months after his appearance in the London court, three months before the actual trial in the Guildhall, Paine was elected a member of the French National Convention by four different departments of the country. This call to go to France was irresistible. Paine saw a chance to mould a revolution more directly than he had been able to do in his earlier days in America, and more immediately than would be possible for many years to come in England. As for the situation in England, he had given every chance to the authorities to arrest and try him. If he was away when at last the case was called, it was nobody's fault but the government's. So on September 13, 1792, Paine landed in Calais, amid cheering throngs of people, and moved to Paris in a kind of triumphal procession as he passed from town to town. Already, with Washington, Madison, Hamilton, Kosciusko, Wilberforce, Clarkson and others, he had been named a "citizen of the Republic," and was known as one of the world's greatest heroes of liberty. So began the third period of Paine's career, which lasted for ten years, until his return to the United States in September, 1802. The scene of this period was France, as the scenes of the first two periods had been America and England; and the book by which it was made forever memorable was *The Age of Reason.*

Paine took his place in the French Convention just in time to take part in the trial of Louis XVI. Had he arrived a little later his career as a French revolutionist might have been very different. As it was, he resolved, in accordance with his humanitarian principles, to do his utmost to save the king; and therewith he won the undying hatred of the radicals who were slowly but surely coming into power. His speech in opposition to the death penalty stirred Marat to an unprecedented outburst of denunciation and wrath. His vote for imprisonment until the end of the war, and after this perpetual banishment, was in defiance of the will of Danton, Robespierre, and the vast majority of the Convention. When the Girondins or moderates were overthrown, and the terrorists took over control of the revolutionary government, Paine's friends swiftly scattered beyond the border, and he was left almost alone in the shadow of the Mountain. Soon the daily procession to the guillotine began. Frantic efforts were made to persuade Paine to run away. But his heart was in the revolution, he refused to abandon hope of its final escape from tyranny and bloodshed, and resolved to stand his ground at any price. The price was paid on the evening of December 27, 1793, when he was arrested by a party of gendarmes and incarcerated in the Luxembourg prison. Here he remained

for nearly a year, until November 4, 1794, escaping the guillotine by an accident of a chalk-mark on the door of his cell which remains one of the most curious and dramatic episodes in history. He came out of prison a man broken in health but not in spirit. After a prolonged period of convalescence in the hospitable home of James Monroe, the American minister in Paris, who had secured the release, Paine was up and about again, as eager as ever in the cause of liberty.

It was during this period that Thomas Paine wrote his famous book, *The Age of Reason,* which has been more widely read and more furiously defamed than any other work of modern times. As this book is commonly regarded as the very Bible of infidelity and atheism, it may be well to remind ourselves of the real circumstance and purpose of its writing.

In the first place, it had been Paine's intention for some years past "to publish [his] thoughts upon religion." He had fully expressed his mind upon man's political destiny; he wanted now to do the same with man's spiritual destiny. He had helped to strip away the superstition of the divine right of kings; he now wanted to strip away the equally precious superstition of the divine right of the church and of the Bible. He wanted the heart of man, in the one case as in the other, to be free. But this no more meant that Paine was an atheist than his political writings meant that he was an anarchist. On the contrary, Paine was a profoundly religious man, not in the churchly sense but in the human sense. He believed in God, in immortality, in the spiritual duties of justice, mercy and good will. "The world is my country," was his immortal declaration, "and to do good is my religion." He founded in Paris an ethical church to promulgate what he called a "religion of humanity." Now he set to work, on the eve of his arrest, and under the shadow of the guillotine, to prepare what he "intended to be the last offering [he] should make to [his] fellow-citizens of all nations."

But there was a second motive that impelled Thomas Paine to the writing of *The Age of Reason.* This motive sprang from the state of affairs which he found in France when he took his seat in the National Convention. The war against religion had begun. Not only had the church been dis-established and priesthoods of every kind abolished, but all religious faith as well had been anathematized and outlawed. Atheism of a particularly superficial and dangerous type was everywhere rampant in the minds of the revolutionaries, who were running as wild in their attacks upon God as in their attacks upon government and social order. Such atheism was as repellent to Paine's heart as anarchy and terrorism. He had no more use for fanaticism outside the church than for superstition inside the church. He would protect religion not only from the latter but from the former as well. So he wrote his *Age of Reason* "lest, in the general wreck of superstition, of false systems of government and false theologies, we lose sight of morality, of humanity, and of the theology that is true." As Paine said in a later letter to Samuel Adams: "The people of France were running headlong into atheism, and I had the work translated and published in their own language, to stop them in that career, and fix them to the first article of every man's creed—I believe in God."

It was thus in the interests of true religion—of the religion of reason, humanity, and the moral law, as over against the religion of the superstitious priest and the fanatical atheist—that Paine set himself to the writing of his famous book. And it was this book that became the text-book of infidelity! His general plan was to set up the human reason in place of the church and more particularly of the Bible as a guide to truth and a medium of revelation. This led him to an examination of the Scriptures as the inspired word of God, and a thorough job he made of it. Old Testament and New Testament alike he ripped to pieces, showing up their inconsistencies, their historical contradictions, their immoralities and barbarities. The work was faulty, of course; in the eagerness of his quest for the bad things in the Bible, Paine quite forgot or neglected the good and noble things. The work also was rough and crude; Paine was not enough of a scholar, nor indeed was biblical scholarship itself advanced far enough, to enable him to achieve a worthy piece of criticism. But the work was epoch-making all the same. What Paine did, with his blunted tools, was to break up the hard-caked soil of ignorance and superstition, which later was ploughed deep and harrowed fine and sown fruitfully by the great scholars and religious prophets of the nineteenth century.

Of course Paine was far ahead of his time, and he paid the penalty. His book made an enormous sensation. He had the magic gift of words in this work as in every other work that he ever produced, and men simply had to read what he had written. But they read this time not to applaud and follow on, as they did in the case of *Common Sense* and *The Rights of Man,* but to denounce, revile, and persecute. Seldom has such a storm of popular abuse poured down upon a hapless work. Not only in France but in England, the people turned against him, and slandered him as an atheist and infidel. In America his services on behalf of liberty and independence in the Revolutionary War were forgotten or altogether denied, and his name mentioned only to be showered with infamy. Even his friends turned against him. George Washington no longer answered his letters. Benjamin Rush deliberately avoided him when he returned to Philadelphia. Jefferson, whose religion was identical with that of Paine, springing from the same roots of Deism, remained discreetly silent. After his death, abuse went marching on, and has come down unwearied to this later day. It poisoned the mind of Theodore Roosevelt, who described Paine only a few years ago as "a filthy little atheist." It misled John Fiske in his treatment of Paine in his two-volume history of the American Revolution. It recorded its most recent triumph in the distorted and discolored biographical sketch by Gamaliel Bradford. But such abuse, as always, has undone itself. The very bitterness of the attacks upon *The Age of Reason* has kept the book alive through all these years. Long since superseded by other and greater books, it would inevitably have disappeared had it not been for the obsession of its enemies. Nobody knows how many million copies of it have been published during the century and a quarter of its life, nor into how many languages it has been translated. It is still being read today as eagerly and as widely as ever. The history of no modern book is quite so astounding as this.

But *The Age of Reason* ended the career of "Tom" Paine! His days of greatness were over. Returning to America in 1802, he sank almost immediately into obscurity. Paine lived for a time in New York, where in 1804 an attempt was made upon his life. He later retired to his farm at New Rochelle, where he suffered

the supreme humiliation of being denied the right to vote on the specious ground that he was not an American citizen. Leasing his farm in 1806, because of financial necessity, he went to a miserable lodging-house in Fulton Street, where he lived for three years. In April, 1809, he moved to 59 Grove Street, and here two months later, on the eighth day of June, in the seventy-second year of his age, he died.

Thomas Paine was the revolutionist *par excellence* —a rebel to the very marrow of his bones. He lived in a time of revolution. Alone, among the revolutionary figures of that stormy era, Thomas Paine played a part, and a conspicuous part, in each one of the three theatres of the drama. In America, in England, and in France, he stands equally among the heroes of national liberty. Wherever the struggle was on, there Thomas Paine went with an instinct as sure as that of the homing pigeon to his nest. No man ever spoke a noble word so deservedly as did this man when, in retort to Adams's boast that where liberty was, there was his country, he said, "Where liberty is *not,* there is my country!"

As a revolutionist, Paine manifested qualities of exceptional nobility. Courage and generosity stood highest, perhaps, among his virtues. Thus, he showed great courage in America, when, an Englishman, just recently arrived from England, he espoused the cause of the colonists, and signed his name to the first clear and unqualified appeal for independence from the British crown when the prospect of victory for American arms seemed darkest. He showed greater courage still in England, when he awaited openly his arrest and trial as the author of a seditious book in an age when the penalty might well have been death. He showed the greatest courage of all when he opposed the excesses of the revolutionaries in France, refused to flee the Terror, and wrote feverishly on his *Age of Reason* while awaiting calmly to be taken to the guillotine. Thrice was this man's courage tried, and not once did he flinch.

His generosity matched his courage. His writings were the most popular of his day. Paine might have become wealthy from his royalties alone. But he wrote his books not to make money, but to influence the minds of men and therewith turn the tides of destiny. So he sacrificed all royalties that the price might be reduced to the lowest possible figure, and received not a penny from the hundreds of thousands of copies of his books which were sold throughout his lifetime. In 1780, when the American army was suffering the most acute distress, and a letter from Washington to the Pennsylvania Assembly announced "mutiny and sedition" if the soldiers were not relieved, Paine instantly subscribed his total salary of $500, and thus headed the subscription list which saved the day. When his publisher in England insisted upon sending him more than a thousand pounds due him on the sales of *The Rights of Man,* Paine handed over the entire amount as a gift to a revolutionary organization known as the Society for Constitutional Information. Never was there a more unselfish man. That he died in abject and miserable poverty was the symbol, as it is the glory, of his career.

Paine was thus courageously and generously a revolutionist because he believed in liberty. This word was the talisman of his life. Men should be free, and the institutions which bound them should be destroyed. Of every form of tyranny Paine was the consistent enemy. The tyranny of the church was as abhorrent to his soul as the tyranny of the state; the tyranny of the terrorist as intolerable as the tyranny of the king. Priest and monarch, Robespierre and George III, all were alike in his sight, because they oppressed the people, and denied to them the liberty which was their birthright from the hand of God. What to do with liberty after it was won, Paine did not understand as wisely as many of the other leaders of his day. He had none of the poise of Washington, little of the wisdom of Franklin, only a moderate share of the constructive genius of Madison. Paine was no statesman. But he had the passion which made him a prophet. He heated men to a white heat by the blazing fire of his conviction, and then left them to be moulded by other men.

Paine's belief in liberty sprang fundamentally from his belief in men. He had confidence in human nature. All his instincts were humanitarian, and led him to the espousal of all humanitarian reforms. He hated war, although he was willing to use it in the cause of liberty. He opposed and ridiculed the practice of duelling. He enveighed against capital punishment. He denounced slavery when first his eyes fell upon it, and, in an age when Washington and Jefferson were slave-holders, he was an abolitionist. He wrote the first plea on behalf of the emancipation of women ever published in America. He espoused the cause of dumb animals, and sought to organize societies for their protection. This man had a savage pen, which seared the souls of his opponents like red-hot iron. But his heart was as tender as a child's, and went out in infinite compassion to all suffering flesh.

It was because he believed so profoundly in men, and loved life with such intensity, that Paine believed in God. He could not understand this universe with God removed, any more than Voltaire could. So he preached religion, only it was a humanist religion unknown at that day to the churches.

And all this was forgotten because Paine attacked the Bible! For a hundred years his name has been defamed and slandered, and only now is recovering the lustre so long hidden by the slime of ignorance and hate.

In 1792, the year of the publication of *The Rights of Man,* there came to this country the great English journalist and reformer, William Cobbett. In 1796, Cobbett wrote a biographical sketch of Paine which reproduced all the miserable lies and slanders of the time. Years later, Cobbett discovered his mistake and made atonement. Returning to this country in 1819, he gathered up the bones of Thomas Paine from the grave into which they had been hastily flung on the farm in New Rochelle, and took them back with him to England that they might be buried in honor in the soil from which they had sprung. Misfortune attended his purpose, but it remains a precious parable. For as Cobbett, the defiler, came again in reverence to the bones of Thomas Paine, so the world, also a defiler through these many years, will come to this man's spirit, to preserve it in honor evermore. "At his expiring *flambeau,*" said Cobbett, "I lighted my taper." At this same torch will the world long light the taper of its hope.

"To argue with a man who has renounced his reason is like giving medicine to the dead."—Thomas Paine.

Thomas Paine and the Rights of Man

E. BURDETTE BACKUS

Permit me to remind you of the circumstances under which *The Rights of Man,* aptly described as the first text-book of Republicanism, was written. At the conclusion of the Revolutionary war Thomas Paine had turned to the development of an iron bridge which he had conceived—the first of the kind in the world. He had perfected the plans, but because of the unsatisfactory state of the iron industry he decided to return to England to have the bridge built.

Shortly after he arrived in his native land Burke issued his *Reflections on the Revolution of France.* Paine at once flew to the defense of Democracy. He had long been wanting to write a book on the republican principles of government, and Burke's challenge provided him with the occasion. Seldom, if ever, has a political tract had such a powerful effect. It immediately became the center of controversy. Over a million copies were sold. It stimulated a revolutionary ferment in England. The publishers were prosecuted. On the insistence of his friends Paine fled to France and barely escaped in time to save his life. He was tried for treason in his absence and found guilty. Even the readers of his book were in danger of imprisonment.

There is one incident of the trial which will bear repetition because it carries a moral not inappropriate to our day. Paine's defense was conducted by Thomas Erskine, attorney general for the Crown Prince who lost his position for his temerity. Evidently he learned his lesson, for we later find him *prosecuting* the publishers of *The Age of Reason.* But at this time he made an able though futile plea for the freedom of the press. He employed the fable of Lucian which tells of a conversation between Jupiter and a peasant. The peasant listened with attention and acquiesced in the conversation as long as Jupiter tried only to convince him by reason and argument. But when the countryman hinted a doubt of the truth and propriety of something Jupiter had advanced, Jupiter instantly turned around and threatened him with his thunder. "Nay, Nay!" said the peasant, "If you up with your thunder, I believe you are in the wrong. You are always in the wrong when you appeal to your thunder."

The argument of *The Rights of Man* is based on a philosophy which no longer commends itself to our minds though it then dominated the thinking of such leaders as Jefferson, Franklin, Washington. It was the political philosophy of Rousseau which was written into the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Perhaps these words were inserted because of Paine's influence. At any rate he held the theory that men are born with certain natural rights.

Allow me to quote his words from *The Rights of Man:*

> "Natural rights are those which appertain to man in right of his existence. Of this kind are all the intellectual rights, or rights of the mind, and also those rights of acting as an individual for his own comfort and happiness, which are not injurious to the rights of others. Civil rights are those which appertain to man in right of his being a member of society. Every civil right has for its foundation some natural right pre-existing in the individual, but to which his individual power is not, in all cases, sufficiently competent. Of this kind are all those which relate to security and protection."

Paine believed that at some earlier and happier stage of human history man had been in possession of these rights but that he had been dispossessed of them by conquest and tyranny and that he must now set about recovering them. He interpreted the American and the French revolutions as the recovery on the part of man of his natural rights which had been taken away from him. He was aflame with his revolutionary zeal; the boundlessness of the hope it inspired in him flares up in his statement, "I do not believe that monarchy and aristocracy will continue seven years longer in any of the enlightened countries of Europe." That was written in 1790.

We no longer accept the doctrine of certain inalienable rights implanted in men by their Creator; we no longer look back to a golden age in which men enjoyed natural and social life from which they were despoiled by conquest and tyranny. We have an evolutionary philosophy which holds that all the rights of man are an achievement within the process of social evolution rather than pre-existing in the individual. We are persuaded that while historical evidence is not uniform, yet on the whole man has progressed in his rights as he has moved from savagery to civilization.

However, the philosophy of Natural Rights made a grand weapon for battling against the entrenched privilege of a landed aristocracy, and never was it wielded more lustily than in Paine's *The Rights of Man.* Emerson has said that revolutions are made with words as hard as cannon-balls. Paine knew how to cast such words, how to hurl them with explosive power. He proclaims in language that the humblest can understand the evils from which men suffer, and in equally plain words tells how they are to be remedied. He would take the power of rule away from the king and nobles and invest it in the people of the nation to whom it rightly belongs; "governments derive their just power from the consent of the governed." He would use the wealth that has been lavished on a small class to alleviate the sufferings of the poor.

He announces himself as the champion of industry and commerce which are the victims of the governing class. Listen to his words: "We still find the greedy hand of government thrusting itself into every corner and crevice of industry and grasping the spoil of the multitude. . . . It watches prosperity as its prey and permits none to escape without a tribute." Elsewhere he says he has battled for manufacturer and the merchant, that he has been an advocate of commerce because he is a friend of its effects, and he prophesies that were commerce permitted to act to the universal extent of which it is capable it would extirpate the system of war and produce a revolution in the uncivilized state of governments.

Those of you who accept as valid the economic interpretation of history will recognize in all of this the voice of the new mercantile class which was rising to wrest supremacy away from the landowners who had so long maintained it, a confirmation of the theory that the American and French Revolutions were both a part of the common bourgeoise upheaval, with the proletariat revolution yet far in the distance. Cer-

tainly, however, in the mind, in the great heart of Thomas Paine, the benefits of the change he was proposing were not to be confined to the members of a single class, but were to be shared by all humanity, especially by those who suffer most—the very poor.

This emerges with striking clarity in the social program which *The Rights of Man* develops. It advocates the education of the children of the poor at public expense, proposes to lighten the burden of poverty-stricken mothers in time of child-birth by giving them a subsidy, urges definite measures to offset the evils of unemployment, advocates an old age pension—not, to be sure, on the generous scale of the Townsend plan—Paine's plan called for $30 a year instead of $2,400. When you recall that all this was nearly 150 years ago it makes you doubly aware of Paine's deep humanity. At the other end of the scale his sympathy was broad enough to include even the members of the hated aristocracy. Remember that cry of his to the French assembly when it proposed to execute Louis. "Kill the *king,* but not the man."

Thomas Paine had an undue, I almost said a wild, optimism concerning the fruits of democracy. He was sure that the evils characteristic of the poverty-stricken masses of the world are the product of the tyranny and oppression of government, and that once such tyranny is removed the latent capacity of the people will develop. He prophesied on this basis that what Athens was in miniature America will be in magnitude. He was certain that representative government is calculated to produce the wisest laws, by collecting wisdom where it can be found. He assured his readers that in a Democracy every man understands as much about the affairs of government as the persons elected to office (and he was not acquainted with our present estimate of senatorial capacity). He boasted that the whole expense of the Federal Government in the United States was but $600,000 a year in support of his thesis that "the more perfect civilization is, the less occasion does it have for government." Judged by that standard, the astronomical figures of our current Federal Budget must have dug a hole straight through the planet and buried American Civilization somewhere out beyond the stars towards which the Chinaman gazes by night.

The picture which Paine draws of life in America is highly Utopian: "There," he says, "the poor are not oppressed, the rich are not privileged. Industry is not mortified by the splendid extravagance of a court rioting at its expense. Their taxes are few, because their government is just: and as there is nothing to render them wretched there is nothing to engender riots and tumults." Do you recognize the portrait?

Do not misapprehend me. I am not seeking to discredit Thomas Paine. Far from it. We are sadly disillusioned; we understand that there is far more to the human problem than Paine and his co-workers realized in the first flush of the democratic dawn. But they made a heroic beginning at the task on which we are still engaged and on which our descendants for many a generation will continue to be engaged. The significance of Paine lies in the fact that at a certain critical juncture of history he did all that was humanly possible to advance the cause of mankind by attacking the central problem of his day with a fearlessness of mind that led inevitably to the rejection of established tradition and the espousal of what under the existing conditions seemed to offer a happy solution.

You and I cannot today accept as true all that Paine propounds in *The Age of Reason.* Adopting his method of relying on informed intelligence has carried us beyond some of his conclusions. The same is true of *The Rights of Man.* Changed conditions require us to modify some of his proposals. For example, we find him urging the repeal of laws determining how much a laboring man should receive; this he did because he wanted to win for the laborer freedom to sell his labor in the open market. Under the existing conditions this meant a step in advance for the laborer. Paine could not foresee that a time was to come when the laboring man would need the protection of the state from an industry grown so powerful as to be capable of oppressing its minions quite as inhumanly as ever did feudal lords. "New occasions teach new duties, time makes ancient good uncouth."

Paine himself recognized the truth that Lowell has thus expressed, and would have been the first to insist that his answers must not be taken as final. At the very outset of *The Rights of Man* we find him saying:

"No generation possesses the right to determine the form of government to the end of time. Every age and generation must be free to act for itself. . . . The circumstances of the world are continually changing . . . that which may be found right and convenient in one age, may be thought wrong and found inconvenient in another. . . . The best constitution that could now be devised, consistent with the tradition of the present moment, may be far short of that excellence which a few years may afford."

The point is one deserving of emphasis because the god of things as they are is amazingly clever in blinding our eyes so that we are unable to see where the rights of man lie when those rights demand a change which we find it unpleasant to make. The case of Burke is apropos. He was an intelligent man, a humane man. His *Reflections on the Revolution of France* was not motivated by wickedness; he was simply blinded by self-interest, by the interests of the class with which he identified himself, so that he was unable to see the social causes out of which the French Revolution sprang. The verdict of posterity, at least of that portion of posterity which still believes in democracy, is that he was wrong and Paine was right. It is so easy to pass these judgments on the distant past; so difficult to render them on the pressing issues of today. Verily how fervently do all of us need to pray that prayer for an understanding heart that we may have wisdom to discern where the real right doth lie so that we may not be found fighting against our common humanity, but always in its behalf.

"When it shall be said in any country in the world, 'My poor are happy; neither ignorance nor distress is to be found among them; my jails are empty of prisoners, my streets of beggars; the aged are not in want, the taxes are not oppressive; the rational world is my friend, I am a friend of its happiness'—when these things can be said, then may that country boast of its constitution and its government."—Thomas Paine.

Thomas Paine's Religion of Humanity

CHARLES H. LYTTLE

Three events of signal importance to liberalism in politics and religion occurred in 1737. In that year the Pope formally condemned the organization of Deism, the universal religion of nature, in the form of speculative Freemasonry, as organized in the Grand Lodge of London, and a warfare that has lasted to this day began; for in every Roman Catholic country, Freemasonry has been a formidable enemy of religious and political absolutism. In 1737, Ethan Allen, Revolutionary free lance, rationalistic free-thinker, founder of Vermont, was born. On January 29, 1737, in Thetford, England, son of a Quaker father and an Anglican mother, Thomas Paine was born. All three events have great significance for the course of intellectual, religious, and political liberty; but the birth of Paine is undoubtedly paramount.

It will be at once observed that all these centenaries fall into the one large category of Deistic religion, and the fact may well decide at once the particular aspect of Paine's personality, thought, and work to which this memorial tribute shall be devoted. Yet, to write of Paine's religious views is the only way in which to interpret all the other notable aspects of his nature and genius, since he was a publicist of republican liberty, a stormy petrel of its revolutions in America and France, an exiled agitator of its reforms in England, a radical economist with a strikingly modern program of social security for the unemployed, the ill, the aged, a student of science, an inventor of iron bridges; because first and foremost he was a devout, indeed an evangelical, Deist. In those days, Deism, like Humanism in these days, was the creed of liberty, political then, economic now. Voltaire, Franklin, Jefferson were great libertarians and humanitarians because their world view was Deistic; and as Paine ranks with them in service and in fame, so he belongs to them in Deistic fervor. He thought and wrote with penetration, logic, authority and practicality because his Deistic world view enabled him to do so with perfect certitude.

Thomas Paine was predisposed to Deism because his father took him to Quaker meetings in his boyhood days, and though he later disavowed the drab austerity of the Quaker tradition, as well as its absolute pacifism, he retained and frequently professed his profound admiration for the simplicity of Quaker worship, their humanitarianism, especially with respect to negro slavery, and their integration of religious profession with character and conduct. Theirs was a religion without priests, rabbis, or pastors, and Paine had an aversion to making a living out of religion—a common Deistic tenet. In fact, the only clergymen to whom he refers with approbation in his writings are, if I mistake not, the radical and revolutionary Unitarians, Dr. Richard Price and Dr. Joseph Priestley, his contemporaries. Both were, like himself, in sympathy with the American and the French Revolution; both were progressive political economists, both were proficient in science, both incurred odium and persecution for their heterodoxies.

While Paine was in England he apparently felt some sympathy with the more liberal tendencies in the Church of England, typified by Theophilus Lindsey, an Anglican rector who gave up a lucrative living and brilliant prospects of preferment to establish the first Unitarian chapel in London. Paine went so far as to apply for orders in the Church, but was rejected because of his ignorance of Latin. In this lingering confidence in his mother's communion he remained until, in Philadelphia, 1776, he threw himself with fervor into the struggle for independence. It then became clear to him that hostility to Britain entailed hostility to her Church and the iniquities of the Establishment. The white hot enthusiasm of the critical years of the American Revolution, during which he wrought his chief work for liberty—*Common Sense,* the *Crisis* papers and other broadsides—also smelted his religious convictions into a militant Deism. It is evident that it was Great Britain's policy of mercenary and terroristic cruelty in dealing with insubordination in her colonies that awakened Paine to the acknowledgment of a "religion of humanity"; at the same time he dedicated himself to the cause of American liberty and independence:

"When I reflect on the horrid cruelties practiced by Great Britain in the East Indies, how thousands perished of artificial famine . . . how religion and every manly principle of honor and honesty were sacrificed to luxury . . . when I read of wretched natives blown from the cannon's mouth for no other reason than that they refused to fight . . . I firmly believe that the Almighty, in compassion to mankind, will curtail the power of Britain."

Then, after instancing the barbarities of the slave trade, promoted by the British interests:

"Call it independence or what you will, if it is the cause of God and Humanity, it will go on!" (A Serious Thought, 1775).

It is apparent from the above that Paine's religion is inextricably involved with his now crusading humanitarianism, and both with the Colonies' struggle for political liberty. The seventh *Crisis* paper (1777) contains the crucial phrase in which freedom, righteousness, humanity and the Divine Nature and Will are fused and united:

"The arm of Britain has been spoken of as the arm of the Almighty and she has lived of late as if she thought the whole world was created for her diversion. Her politics, instead of civilizing has tended to brutalize mankind and under the vague, unmeaning title of 'Defender of the Faith' she has made war like an Indian against *the religion of humanity.*"

This is not, of course, Comte's agnostic religion of Humanity, and it is likely that Paine would have differed emphatically from Comte's thesis that we have no positive data for believing in a supranatural Deity uniting in himself infinite intelligence, benevolence, and power. Paine's favorite passage in *The Age of Reason* states his view concisely:

"Do we want to contemplate his power? We see it in the immensity of His creation. Do we want to contemplate His wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate His munificence? We see it in the abundance with which He fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in His not withholding that abundance, even from the unthankful. Do we want to contemplate his will, so far as it respects man? The goodness He shows to all is a lesson for our conduct to each other."

To the modern mind, all this is not so simple to see, as to an optimist of the Age of Reason. But this optimism was the very best provocative of revolutionary discontent, contrary to the current misconceptions concerning it. Paine was not optimistic about this "best of all possible worlds" *as it now is.* He was optimistic about its pristine status at the moment of creation, and about the competency of man's free reason and social instincts to cast off the tyranny of kings, priests, and

rich men and restore the world's primitive perfection. In the beginning, men were wholly free, thoroughly reasonable, truthful, and ethical, but by the exploiting guile of others, human nature has been misled into greed, superstition, meanness and inhumanity. Revealed religion, presenting immoral tales and ideas of God and his government, has been a prime instrument in man's corruption. Doctrines of the divine right of kings and of the possession of vast wealth gained by craft and cruelty, have been supported by revealed religion and its priests, to the untold injury of man. *Natural* law, *natural* rights, *natural* religion, or republican Deism, support man's awakening to the shame and pain of his enslavement, and his exertions to overthrow his exploiting and degrading despots of throne, altar, and exchange.

Just as Protestantism appealed to an apostolic Christianity that in reality never existed in order to justify its struggle against the Papacy, so republican Deism appealed to a chimerical golden age of political and economic freedom and equality to justify its struggle against absolute monarchy and an intolerant established church. In the same way, socialistic humanism appeals to a unity and dignity of humanity that have been presumably damaged by nationalism, and to a "natural right" of the workers to all they produce, of which they have been robbed by capitalistic employers. But such premises though historically as fallacious as Paine's "state of nature" and "natural rights," and Protestantism's "primitive Christian church" have been of inestimable value in providing revolution and reform with belligerent morale. Pessimistic realism and evolutionist fatalism are impotent by comparison!

Because of the thorough-going and absolutely disinterested logic with which Paine applied his Deistic republicanism, he went much further with the revolutionary ideal than did the other leaders of the American and the French overturns, and probably foresaw, since he often hinted, the advance of the passion for freedom, justice, and humanity into the economic field:

> "The superstitious awe, the enslaving reverence that formerly surrounded affluence is passing away in all countries . . . when wealth and splendor instead of fascinating the multitude excite emotions of disgust; when, instead of drawing forth admiration it is beheld as an insult upon wretchedness; when the ostentatious appearance it makes serves to call the right of it in question, the case of property becomes critical. . . ."

* * * *

It may seem that we have digressed hopelessly from the theme of Paine's "religion of humanity." Not at all! For it was never mere pietism, sentimentality, and theology. The Deism which Voltaire formulated in his four famous words, *"Sers Dieu, sois juste"* Paine interpreted as (1) a duty of reverent gratitude to God, cheerful resignation to His will in life's vicissitudes, confident assurance that His righteousness will prevail eventually; and (2) as a duty of universal philanthropy, exercised in every region in which man is oppressed, degraded, and wretched. In the practice of such philanthropy, science as well as political radicalism can help greatly. In an address on "The Existence of God" delivered to the newly founded church of the Theophilanthropists (Lovers of God and Man) in Paris, 1797, Paine indicated how he would have natural theology (Deism) inculcated by means of scientific lectures and experiments, to the end that

> "We shall, in the first place, render theology the most delightful and entertaining of all studies. In the next place we shall give scientific instruction . . . the mechanic of every profession will there be taught the mathematical principles necessary to render him proficient in his art; the gardener will there see developed the principles of vegetation while at the same time, they will be led to see the hand of God in all these things."

It is noteworthy that on Paine's return to New York City in 1804, he took an active part in the establishment of a Deistic Society, whose Sunday afternoon program included, occasionally, scientific lectures and demonstrations. If only the emphasis of such lectures had been laid upon the victories of science as well as its immortal audacities and heroism, rather than upon academic expositions of its "principles," Paine's Deistic Society might be flourishing and influential today.

Like many preachers, Paine could not write or talk upon any subject without adverting to his religious convictions; but unlike many preachers these convictions were so profound and genuine that they gave to his life an amazing power of unselfish zeal, of keen, vigorous thought, of personal purity and probity, of serenity in exile, imprisonment, and poverty, of tranquil faith in democracy when Bonaparte in Russia and Federalism in America bid fair to nullify all he had striven for. Thereby he proved that his "religion of humanity" was not merely rational, not merely ethical, not merely humanitarian but all these together and yet more—a vital faith that a life of universal philanthropy, practically construed, was a life in eternal harmony with the supreme Cosmic purpose for Mankind. The consciousness of such harmony realized for him, in the noblest sense, the truth of his own words:

> "The true theology of man
> Is happiness of mind."

Thomas Paine: A Tribute

CURTIS W. REESE

Born at Thetford, England, on January 29, 1737, of a Quaker father and an Episcopalian mother who were ostracized by their respective communities, Thomas Paine was removed from school at the age of thirteen and taught to make stays. After a varied experience as staymaker, excise clerk, teacher, and recognized thinker and debater, he met Benjamin Franklin, who gave him letters of introduction which he soon presented in America. His love of freedom and his overpowering desire to help humanity threw him into the thick of the fight for human rights.

As editor of The *Pennsylvania Magazine* he advocated and prophesied speedy separation of the Colonies from England. A number of his editorials and paragraphs were published in a pamphlet called *Common Sense* which was read by practically all literate Americans. When Independence was declared, Thomas Paine enlisted as a private, but continued his writing, some of which was read at Washington's command to revolutionary soldiers. The first words of his *Crisis*, "These are times that try men's souls," have become the common possession of all men. No man did more

than he to formulate and to establish the principles of the "Free and Independent States of America."

Back in England he published in 1792 *The Rights of Man* which created such a stir that his life was endangered. Going to France, again he entered the fight for freedom and became a member of the Chamber of Deputies. While he believed in the death of the office of kingship, he voted for the life of the king, for which humane and independent action he was imprisoned for nearly a year, during which time he wrote parts of *The Age of Reason.*

In 1802 Thomas Paine was brought to America on a ship provided by the President, Thomas Jefferson. He then retired to his farm eighteen miles from New York City, where he spent the remainder of his days, and where he died in 1809.

Unbiased historians increasingly give Thomas Paine his proper place in history. He was a patriot of the first rank, and a father of republican ideas; he was a pioneer in the advocacy of the constitutional form of government, the emancipation of the negro, international arbitration, the rights of women, and world patriotism; and in many other ways he proved himself a man of big ideas and large affairs.

But in the field of religion Thomas Paine is still misunderstood by the mass of the people. He believed that emancipation from political tyranny could be maintained only by people emancipated from the tyranny of dogmas. He held that true religion consisted in carefully planned goodness. He regarded conscience as a growing thing and believed that the contemporary conscience had the right to sit in judgment on the standards and ideas of the past. He said: "To do good is my religion." "My own mind is my own church." Again he said: "I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life. I believe in the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow creatures happy." This was substantially the belief of the leading early American statesmen and men of letters. And today Thomas Paine's belief is conservative from the more radical point of view of many reputable clergymen.

It is one of the ironies of history that the country which builds monuments and institutions to its founding fathers, which remembers them in celebration after celebration with the singing of songs and the waving of flags, should fail to do sufficient honor to the man who did as much as the best of them to make America the "home of the free." I think the reason is that Thomas Paine when dealing with religious matters, as with other questions, was not content for his mind to function in part only. James has taught us that for the mind to function properly it must not only say, "I mean this," but also "I do not mean the other." Thomas Paine was not content to deal in generalities; he wanted to be understood and he was understood. His supreme crime was that he told the truth as he saw it, holding back nothing. He fearlessly lifted the veil from the age of superstition and ushered in the age of reason.

Thomas Paine's *cause* was to do good and to free mankind. This *cause* dominated his life. It led him to fight for his fellow laborers in England, to cast his fortunes with frozen soldiers on American battlefields, to give himself freely to struggling France, to write and publish unpopular things, and, through it all, to face courageously sharp and bitter ingratitude. Few men, if any, ever did more for freedom, and received less gratitude and honor for their trouble, than did Thomas Paine. Although his enemies dogged his steps to the gates of death, he passed from the world still firm in the faith that had urged him on.

Thomas Paine: American Patriot and Crusader

DAVID GITTLEMAN

Thomas Paine—British subject, American patriot-in-arms, highly esteemed citizen of New France, essayist and philosopher—was a product of and in line with that spiritual and ethical Renaissance of mankind to be traced back from the traditions of Isaiah and Confucius down through the searchings of Socrates, the struggles of Jeremiah and Jesus, the persecutions of Bruno; the cultural rebirth of Italy, the Protestant Reformation, the American War for Independence, and the French Revolution, to our own twentieth century at the crossroads of momentous events. Worshiping under the banner of Reason, Justice, Honor and Humanity, he was fated to appear at a time when man was turning a new leaf, breaking away from the fetters of feudalism, court aristocracy and royal despotism, whose combined forces vainly contrived to halt the march of progress and civilization. With his life and writings, he epitomized the historical problems of his day doing his best to focus and crystallize the higher aspirations of a humanity struggling to liberate itself from the oppressions of ancient tyrannies. His was a brave soul soaring above befogging convention and petty selfishness. "I speak an open and disinterested language," he says, "dictated by no passion but that of humanity. To me, who have not only refused offers because I thought them improper, but have declined rewards I might with reputation have accepted, it is no wonder that meanness and imposition appear disgusting." "Independence," he emphatically declares, "is my happiness, and I view things as they are, without regard to place or person; my country is the world, and my religion is to do good." This is the man at his best.

Thomas Paine was born on January 29, 1737, into the home of a small farmer-staymaker of Quaker faith in Thetford, Norfolk, England. His early private life was crowded with an unhappy combination of incidents sharpening the edge of a keen mind and restive temperament. As staymaker, marine, schoolmaster, and excise-man, his was not a shining lot. Twice married, he failed to find that happiness and strength only a happy home can provide. At the age of thirty-five he made his wider public appearance when he represented the excisemen in their demands for salary increase. In the year 1774, at the age of thirty-seven, he found himself an all-round failure.

At this critical juncture in his life, an acquaintance made in London with an American named Benjamin

Franklin opened a luring vista with ample opportunities for a new start. Having liquidated his family ties and business obligations, with a packet of letters of introduction from the American, the British ex-exciseman found himself in November, 1774, in the city of Philadelphia, facing with a throbbing heart and open mind the New World of pioneers and promise. Upon arrival, he was immediately established in the offices of the then flourishing *Pennsylvania Magazine*. In the conflict that ensued between the thirteen colonies and Great Britain, Thomas Paine suddenly found himself on the crest of the upheaval engulfing his new homeland. He felt it within him to become voluntarily the spokesman of a new nation in the throes of birth. And in January, 1776, full six months before the historical Fourth of July, he published a pamphlet entitled *Common Sense*. It gained a tremendous circulation, the direct effect of which was the Declaration of Independence. *Common Sense* was the voice of America coming of age; bravely challenging foreign despotism and offering a scholarly argument for the case of full political freedom for the protection of the economic rights of the colonies.

But he saw in the American conflict more than a local affair. He expressed his belief in the Introduction, where he says, "The cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind." This declaration gave the struggle for independence the historical justification before the eyes of the civilized world; while to the virgin Congress and to the raw troops under arms and its high command it gave courage and purpose and an unswerving determination that brought final victory and created the United States of North America. The following crucial year found him in active service on the front at Trenton. He served as a private under the command of General Nathaniel Greene, raising the morale of the troops with the publication of the first *Crisis*, which appeared in the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, December 19, 1776. It furnished the now famous battle cry, "These are the times that try men's souls," which rallied to final victory the soldiers of young America at a time which did indeed hold the fate of a nation in the balance. Paine wrote it as he viewed the small shattered forces of the valiant George Washington making their retreat across the Delaware. And its real significance can be attested by the fact that this *Crisis* was read, by order of the commander, to the struggling and suffering soldiers. The victory at Trenton, a few days after its publication, strengthened the Army for further trial and ultimate victory. In this message of cheer to the retreating troops he expresses a devout conviction

"that God Almighty will not give up a people to military destruction, or leave them unsupportedly to perish, who have so earnestly and so repeatedly sought to avoid the calamities of war, by every decent method which wisdom could invent."

During the entire period of the struggle, thirteen issues of the *Crisis* appeared; each serving an immediate urgent need; the last appearing on April 19, 1783, the eighth anniversary of the Lexington shot.

In the year 1781, Paine was sent with others to France on a mission to negotiate the all-important interests of the pressed colonies. He was appointed by Congress as Secretary to the Committee of Foreign Affairs; and later received the commission of Clerk of the Pennsylvania legislature. At the conclusion of the War, Congress, in 1785, expressed its gratitude for his services by a cash grant of $3,000; while the State of New York donated to him a 300-acre farm at New Rochelle. Desirous, among other things, to display his model of an iron bridge (with the symbolic thirteen ribs!), Paine sailed, in 1787, for England, where he was caught in the maelstrom of public agitation that followed the fall of the Bastille.

The perusal of Burke's attack against the French Revolution, published in 1790, stirred the dynamic pen of the pamphleteer to action and, as in the previous struggle of the Colonies, produced, in 1791-92, an extended pamphlet, *The Rights of Man*, generously dedicated to the First President of the United States of America. Its immediate circulation in England alone is said to have reached fabulous numbers. Most undiplomatically, the author analyzed "the nature and practices of government," attacking British institutions, old despotism in all forms, rudely tracing monarchy to the zeal for conquest and plunder; taking William the Norseman as the base of his query. As it was to be expected, May, 1792, saw the author of *The Rights of Man* duly indicted for treason against the Crown. Paine escaped to Paris, where, for aid rendered to the French people, he was elected deputy to the National Convention by the Department of Pas-de-Calais.

Unquestionably sincere in his convictions, the fearless warrior was a poor diplomat. In the partisan struggle that blazed in the ranks of the French patriots, Thomas Paine found himself outside the glamor of the Jacobins; offended Robespierre's faction by bravely defending the life of Louis XVI, whom he thought a kind and benevolent person; was arrested and, most likely thanks to American intervention, closely escaped the overworked guillotine. During his prolonged imprisonment, Paine worked on *The Age of Reason*, whose full publication, in 1795, had the effect of a bombshell discharged in the midst of a lulling convention. The indiscreet rationalist appeared at his best; simultaneously alienating his friends of conventional creeds, whose complacent sensitiveness his penetrating scalpel upturned with scientific precision but unintentional affront! . . . With the fall of Robespierre, and a full ten months' certificate of incarceration in a French prison, Paine was honorably restored to his seat in the National Convention; where he faithfully served the interests of the French people to its conclusion in 1795.

In 1802, at the age of sixty-five, the libertarian took sail for the last time, returning to America—the land that captured his soul and in whose future he devoutly believed. But the fame of his *Age of Reason*, where the Quaker-rebel tilted against superstition and dogma, pleading for a natural religion based on a practical rational morality, had preceded his landing. Upon his arrival, he found his popularity vanished; he was socially an untouchable. *The Age of Reason* was too taxing a diet for the primitive minds of his simple neighbors. If it be true, as the eminent author of *The Story of the Bible* maintains, that "the truly great man is he who most influences human thought, and man's best claim to immortality lies in works that bring with them the acclamation of the greatest number of his fellows," then Paine must be one of the chosen few fully entitled to both greatness and immortality. He had faith in man's willingness to learn and his ability to do the right. Though surrounded by a generation thickly "encrusted with myth and superstitution" with "a record unsurpassed in human annals for relentless cruelty and bloodshed," the author of *The Age of Reason* believed with Yearsley that "right education lies in the universal teaching of the *truth* about

things" to be "smelted in the furnace of reason." But this severe test of one's intellectual integrity and manhood was beyond the thorough appreciation of his day —as it is still taboo, two hundred years later, wherever personal interests and local prejudices have the lead. But that poverty of philosophy and littleness of manliness are certainly not the fault of the brave soldier crusading for the rights of man.

At the respectable age of seventy-two, on June 8, 1809, Thomas Paine left this treacherous arena for eternal rest; his remains deposited under sod on his New Rochelle farm; to be removed ten years later to the land of his birth by William Cobbett, of all his admirers, "Ishmael of Politics," Tory turned radical.

Tributes to Paine's genius and services to humanity have been paid by the finest of men throughout the world. His intimate associate and friend, General Lafayette, thought that "Free America without her Thomas Paine is unthinkable." Thomas Jefferson wished him "the reward of the thankfulness of nations." Abraham Lincoln frankly confessed, "I never tire of reading Paine." But the grandest appreciation of the author of *Common Sense* was offered by the great Thomas A. Edison, who referred to him as "the equal of Washington in making American liberty possible. . . . [for] the deeds of the one in the field were matched by the other with his pen." The first real field victory at Trenton, where the small and harassed Continental Army regained its soul for the long years of struggle ahead, proves the vitality of Edison's judgment.

In face of all personal disappointment, Thomas Paine was an incorrigible optimist; and there can be no more fitting tribute to his memory, on the bi-centennial of his birth, than the recollection of his valiant spirit which he himself expressed so fully in the closing line of *The Rights of Man:*

"What pace the political summer may keep with the natural, no human foresight can determine. It is, however, not difficult to perceive that the spring is begun. Thus wishing, as I sincerely do, freedom and happiness to all nations, I close. . . ."

A Sermon on Thomas Paine

Preached in Cincinnati, Ohio, January 29, 1860

By MONCURE D. CONWAY

Ecclesiastes, 9:14-15.

There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man.

Today is the 123d anniversary of the birthday of Thomas Paine, a man who was the leading spirit of three revolutions—one in America, one in France, and one in the Church. I do not propose to give you a biography of this man; it is doubtless familiar to many of you; and those who desire to know the details of his life can easily procure the true, and the only true, record of it by Mr. Vale. But the day, and the man, and the assemblies of honest men throughout the land, which pay homage to his memory, and the annual shudder with which their enthusiasm will be met—these are living facts, representative facts, which no philosopher can pass by, and no friend of man can fail to be interested in. Thomas Paine's life up to 1809, when he died, is interesting; but Thomas Paine's life from that time to 1860 is more than interesting—it is thrilling! It is freighted with the revolutions of thought; it is the realm where are waging the Crimeas and Solferinos of Reason and Knowledge. I may touch on points, here and there, of his life, but it will only be that I may more fairly approach and estimate the living Paine—for all classes, either to their cost or joy, must know how real and vital is the impress that he stamps on the popular heart and mind at this present time.

Every one at all familiar with the beginnings of the war of American Independence knows that the idea of forming an independent republic did not for a long time enter into the question. The adherence to the mother country was so obstinate that those who talked of separation were abused very much as a disunionist is now in these states. Nothing further was contemplated by the agitations and dissatisfactions of our colonies than a change in the British ministry, and the consequent removal of an unjust tax. Washington, Franklin, Rush, and Adams regarded themselves as protesting against a special and practical wrong, which being redressed, they expected matters to go on as usual. They had no idea of fighting for any abstract principle of government. Men never take up arms for abstractions. The word "independence" was only the muttering of a few radicals, frowned on as Garrisonians are now; and, within one month of the battle of Lexington, a man might easily have been hung on Boston Common for uttering it too loudly.

When the dawn of the Revolution was flashing upon the sky in blood-red glow, mingled with the smoke of Lexington and Bunker Hill, four men gathered into a room in Philadelphia—a Boston lawyer, a Philadelphia doctor, a printer of the same city, and a Virginia farmer. Care and apprehension were deeply marked upon their faces; the shadows of forthcoming destinies and inevitable storms were forecast upon them. Those men were John Adams, Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Franklin, and George Washington. These sit together and read the terrible dispatches they have received. Then they pause in gloom and silence. Presently Franklin speaks: "What," he asks, "is to be the end of all this? Is it to obtain justice of Great Britain, to change the ministry, to soften a tax? Or is it for"—— He paused; the word "independence" yet choked the bravest throat that sought to utter it.

There was no response; and at this still, momentous moment a visitor enters. A young Quaker he seems, clad in faded brown coat. He takes his seat, introduced by Franklin, who had met him, as a poor staymaker, with a strong head and face, in London. He breaks the deep silence with these words: "These States of America must be independent of England. That is the only solution of this question!" They all rise to their feet at this political blasphemy. But he goes on; his eye lights up with patriotic fire; his voice rises to prophecy as he paints before them the glorious destiny of America, her resources and power, and the

magnificent future to which he adjures them to entrust and dedicate the Western Continent.

Then these four men, so shocked at first, arose and grasped the stranger's hand; George Washington leaped forward, and, taking both of his hands, besought him to publish these views in a book which should send its thunder-peal throughout the world; and then and there, out of the heart and upon the lips of Thomas Paine, was born the theory and aim of American independence.

Paine went to his room, seized his pen, lost sight of every other object, toiled terribly, and on the New Year's day of 1776 the work entitled, *Common Sense,* which first brought both people and their leaders face to face with the work they had to accomplish, broke sun-like on the land. "That book," says Dr. Rush, "burst from the press with an effect which has been rarely produced by types or paper, in any age or country." The historians, Ramsay, Gordon, and others are unanimous in their opinion that this book was the primary cause of the aim and result to which the Revolution was guided. That idea of independence the pen of Paine fed with fuel from his brain. At this distance, we can scarcely appreciate the electric power of that pen. The battle of Trenton was the Keystone of the Arch of Revolution; and it was on its verge that cold and starvation coiled about the ranks of Washington, and their courage was fast failing. At one time Washington thought that his troops would be entirely dismembered. But the author-hero of the Revolution was tracking their march and writing by the light of camp-fires the essay called *The Crisis.* And when the half-clad troops were called together, these words broke forth upon them:

"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like Hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap we estimate too lightly; 'tis dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed, if so celestial an article as Freedom should not be highly rated."

The opening sentence, "These are the times that try men's souls," became the watchword of the battle of Trenton, and Washington himself set the pen of Paine above any sword wielded that day. Of how many battles since, for national, individual, civil and religious freedom, has that sentence been the watchword!

But we need not dwell on the fact of Paine's services and power in this eventful period. He stood the acknowledged leader of American statesmanship by the proclamations of the Legislatures of all the States, and that of the Congress of the United States; the tribute of his greatest enemy was in these words, "The cannon of Washington was not more formidable to the British than the pen of the author of *Common Sense.*" A little less independence, a little more preference of himself to humanity, and he would have been the first President of the United States; as it was, when victory perched upon the American standard he went to France, where man was preparing to struggle with his oppressor, and became to America the poor wise man who had saved her, and who was forgotten in her prosperity.

The other day, a portrait of Thomas Paine was offered to the city of Philadelphia, to be hung in the hall where American Independence was born, along with the portraits of men who, in those times which tried men's souls, looked to Paine for the watchwords which should inspire victories. The city council refused admission to the portrait; the poor wise man who had saved the city was ungratefully scorned. Now, friends, this means something. It is a more vital thing than at first it seems to be, that this particular star should be struck from our national galaxy. What is the meaning of it? It cannot hurt "Tom" Paine now, but it may be deadly to us; therefore, why cannot we honor the man whose patriotism and heroism bear the official seal of the country and every state in the country, and are signed with the signatures of every good and great man who lived and labored by his side? Jefferson could send a government ship to France to bring him to our shores, Washington could invite him to share Mount Vernon with him, Barlow could describe him as "one of the most benevolent and disinterested of mankind,"—we cannot give his portrait a place of honor, nor hear his name without a shudder. Now, what is the cause of this? What great crime has he committed?

All efforts to stain the good name of Thomas Paine have recoiled on those who made them, like poisoned arrows shot against a strong wind. In the name of priests and tract-societies, miserable men have come forward to cast mire upon him; but their retributions have been swift and terrible. Grant Thorburn, who was set up to prove Paine's intemperance, has only succeeded in uncovering a mean theft of his own early life; and Mr. Cheetham, who lifted his fang to strike the whiteness of his purity, was, even in the godly city of Philadelphia, before a judge and jury who hated Paine, convicted and sentenced for slander and libel against the dead hero and a living and noble woman. Paine's old friend, Elizabeth Ryder, at whose house he boarded during all the period in which he is said to have been dissipated, and whose honesty is as unimpeachable as her means of knowledge, comes forward to a Justice, and, with nearly her last word on earth, brands the pious falsehood. The hero's fame has run the gauntlet of every slander which priestcraft and bigotry could spawn, and has come forth untarnished; a thousand sanctified and clerical reputations have fallen at his side and ten thousand at his right hand, but the pestilence which walketh in darkness could not fix its plague-spot on that honest and just man's name.

What, then, is the cause of a nation's base ingratitude? This, and this alone: Paine believed, fifty years ago, what now the enlightened world believes, namely, that God is a Father, and not a Tyrant; that he does not send millions into this world, from day to day, in the sure knowledge that a large proportion of them will burn in fire and brimstone everlastingly; that God never said, "Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor"; nor that God ever made a universe which at this or that period failed to work out by its laws the best results, and so had to be eked out by a subversion of law, and patched up by special intervention. But did he dislieve in God? Did he deny Christ? Did he mock the solemn and tender hopes which rise trembling but strong from the sacred depths of the human heart and bridge the chasm between Time and Eternity? Had he

done so, it would in nowise palliate the wrong which has been done to a hero and a virtuous man: to be intolerant to an Atheist is to sanction the principle of the Inquisition. But let me quote from his own works the sublime faith which sustained this man through his trying life, and folded its white pinions about him in that mortal hour:

"I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life. I believe in the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow-creatures happy." "Do we want to contemplate God's power? We see it in the immensity of the creation. Do we want to contemplate his wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order in which the incomprehensible whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate his munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in his not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful."

He read the doctrine of Immortality, which he always held, in the caterpillar's resurrection from the grub, and in the resuscitating flow of springtide. He always honored Christ as a pure and elevated man, who taught a perfect morality, and who took into his side a fatal sheaf of the arrows of Ignorance and Selfishness, to break a pass for human souls through the ranks of priestcraft and tyranny into the realm of Liberty of mind and conscience. In all his writings not one disrespectful word to Christ has ever been or can be found!

And this man, for believing what John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, and nearly every thinker of his age believed, is singled out and placed on the pillory of history, simply because he was earnest enough and brave enough to come out and set upon a candlestick the light which others hid under a bushel, to plead for truths which others whispered in the ear, and then only when no self-interest stood in the way. The head and front of his offending hath this extent, no more!

In his life, in his justice, in his truth, in his adherence to high principle, in his disinterestedness, I look in vain for his parallel in those times and in these times. I am selecting my words: I know I am to be held accountable for them. So disinterested was he, that when his works were printed by the ten thousand, and as fast as one edition was out another was demanded, he, a poor and pinched author, who might easily have grown rich, would not accept one cent for them, declared that he would not coin his principles, and made to the States a present of the copyrights. His brain was his fortune—nay, his living: he gave it all to American Independence. The sale of his works has never been surpassed, unless by that of *Uncle Tom's Cabin;* so you may know what he gave to the cause. And his last work, which he knew would surpass all the rest in popularity, he gave up as freely as the first.

Biography affords no finer picture than his action whilst the resolution to give him a large sum was before the Legislature of Virginia. Virginia, at the same time, was making a large claim on the General Government for lands. Paine thought that claim unjust; and though the bill in his favor was yet pending in that State, he came out with the pamphlet which proved Virginia's claim unsound. His friends besought him to delay it; but they reasoned with a soul which sought public, not private, ends. The bill in Paine's favor was not even brought forward in the Legislature of Virginia after this.

A poet has sung—

"Chambers of the great are jails."

Never was the saying more verified than when Thomas Paine, for his unwearied devotion to humanity and justice, lay imprisoned at Paris. That dungeon is the moral palace of a kingly soul. Paine, with his natural devotion to liberty and the high love of man, did all he could to awaken in the French people the spirit which would achieve another glorious Republic, such as that which he had seen established in America. And when the revolution came on, he rejoiced with the liberals. He was almost worshiped in France; was elected to all their assemblies; his name and his presence were the signals for enthusiasm and plaudits. It was for his rectitude that he threw all his popularity away—threw away the prospect of a position almost imperial! When the inspiration of liberty in France degenerated into the thirst for blood, when the aspiration of the people broke forth into the cruelty of a mob, then the son of the old Quaker of Thetford rose up and rebuked them. Ah, where, this side of Thermopylae will you find a scene more full of moral sublimity than that which occurred when, in the French Assembly, which had met to order the execution of Louis XVI, the Secretary read the address of Thomas Paine, protesting in the name of Liberty in both hemispheres against the death of that fated monarch? "Destroy the King," cried Paine, "but spare the man; strike his crown, but not his heart!" The assembly grew furious, and accused the Secretary of misreading: "These are not the words of Thomas Paine," echoed from every side of the hall. "They are my words," replied Paine, rising. Then he, the darling of the people, became the object of their hatred, and soon was by them dragged to prison. Twice was he sentenced: his death-sentence was signed by Robespierre. He escaped it once by a fever, which seemed about to end his life; the second time by an accident—his prison door being open when the officer went round to mark the doors of those who were to be executed the next day; the door being afterward closed, the mark was on the inside. How many tracts on Special Providence would that have given the world had Paine been a churchman! Here it was that the party then in power in this country left him to languish and suffer, all for a high, humane, and heroic refusal to lend his voice to a violent and cruel deed. Here the poor man who had saved the city lay unremembered.

And this is the man railed at by the church, and shuddered at even by some liberal minds! This is the man whose portrait, with its massy brow and eye of light, cannot be set in the hall which he has made sacred! When I look at that life, and hear him denied the name of Christian, I feel that, if he were no Christian, it were so much the worse for Christianity. I only wish that the title of the accusers to that name was as good as that of the accused. It is easy for the preachers to stand up in their marble pulpits—too often the whitened sepulchres of the souls which built them—and flatter Jesus, saying, "Lord, Lord," and denounce Paine; but how many of them could pass through years of toil and revolution, and do no deed that he could wish forgotten, nor utter one word that his friend could wish effaced? I look for Christianity where Wesley looked for it: "I am sick of opinions: give me the life!" Any hypocrite can talk smoothly about Christ; can, like Anthanasius, give stately creeds, whilst he pilfers the bread of widows. When Mary Stuart was led forth to her execution, the Earl of Kent,

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My Russian Impressions*

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Translated from the Original Bengali and Copyrighted (1937) by Basanta Koomar Roy
Author of "Rabindranath Tagore: The Man and His Poetry"

II.

Place: Russia.
Scene: A mansion in the suburbs of Moscow.

I look out of the window to see an endless forest extending to the ends of the horizon. Green flourishes in riotous waves—yes, green of all shades: deep green, light green, green embracing the violet, and green fading into yellow. At the distant end of the forest stand the cottages of the village. It is about ten o'clock in the morning. Clouds float in layers in the sky above. The heads of the lean poplar trees are swaying in the air.

It was at the Grand Hotel that I stopped for a few days in Moscow. The building is huge; but its condition is very poor. As if the son of a rich man has gone into bankruptcy. Some of the paraphernalia of the Czarist days have been sold. Some are torn to pieces. They are too costly to be repaired. They are not clean; and yet all communication with the laundry has been cut off. The same condition is prevalent in every city in Russia. One cannot help noticing how signs of uncleanliness peep out through the grand luxury of the Czarist regime. It seems as if they have golden buttons on a threadbare coat.

Evidences of such universal poverty are nowhere else to be found in all Europe. The main reason is not far to seek. In other countries there exists a gulf of difference between the rich and the poor. Hence the accumulated beauty of wealth forces itself upon your attention. There poverty is kept aside, behind the curtain. In the realm behind the curtain everything is topsy-turvy, unclean, unhealthy—it is all intensely dark there with sorrow and misery and misdeeds. But from the windows of the palaces where we foreigners are allowed to stay we see nothing but elegance, beauty, and plenty. If this wealth could be equally distributed amongst all the members of the society here it could be easily discovered that the total wealth of the nation was not enough to rear all in plenty. Perfect equality in human society reigns here; so wealth has totally disappeared from the scene, even as the brutally ugly deformity of poverty. Now there exists only voluntary poverty. Such a perfectly complete absence of wealth is to be found in no other country; hence we notice the universal poverty in Russia. What is known as common people in other lands is all that is left in Soviet Russia.

All types of people are walking along the streets of Moscow. No one is neatly dressed. It becomes apparent in a moment that the leisure class has been forced to disappear altogether. Everybody has to work for a living. The polish of luxury is altogether absent from Moscow.

Dr. Petrov is a respectable gentleman in Moscow. He is a high official. I had to go to him. He has his office in a building that was once the home of a wealthy man. There is not much furniture in the rooms now. There are no signs of punctilious cleanliness. An ordinary table stands on the carpetless floor. A feeling of emptiness fills the rooms. And yet the host feels perfectly comfortable and quite happy. Everybody feels free from any responsibility of formality. The food of the home where I live would be quite improper for the foreigners residing at the Grand Hotel. But no one feels abashed here—for everybody is in the same boat.

It makes me think of my own childhood days. Living and preparation for living were so simple in those days; and yet we did not feel the least embarrassment for it. The reason was that there was not much feeling of ups and downs in our social idealism. Every home lived a simple life. The difference was in education and in culture; in nobility of manners and purity of character. But the simplicity of our mode of living in those days would cause derision even in the middle class people of today.

The pride of social distinction based on wealth has been imported into India from the West. The new officers and business men imported European luxuries from the West. Thus India degraded into judging culture by the standard of furniture. This furniture-and-wealth culture is drowning the culture of the mind and the soul. This pride of wealth culture is certainly the very depth of degradation for mankind. We must always be on our guard so that the poison of this savagery of degradation may not enter our mental body.

The thing I like the best in Russia is the complete banishment of this barbarity of the pride of wealth. It is because of this great banishment that the flower of self-respect has blossomed forth in an instant in Russia; and the masses of Russia today stand so well fortified in their feeling of self-respect. That is why the toilers on the farms and in the factories have succeeded in casting aside their burdens of shame and stand erect in human society. I am certainly just as happy as I am surprised to see such a sight in this new country. Oh, how this has wonderfully simplified man's relationship with man! I have so much to write to you; and I shall try to write it to you in time. But just at this moment my body needs rest. So I am going to lean back on the long chair by the window, and I shall spread a blanket over my feet—and then if my eyes want to close themselves, I shall not endeavor to forcibly keep them open.

*Written in the period of 1930.—EDITORS.

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seeing her crucifix in her hand, said tauntingly, "We should wear Christ in our hearts." "And why," responded the Queen, "should I have Christ in my hand if he is not in my heart?" And when we see this man living out with his strong right hand the Golden Rule, opening that hand for the needy, using it for uncompensated philanthropy and unwelcome truths, I know that Christ was in his hand, because he was in his heart. A hand holding up to heaven a flaming heart, was Calvin's signet—it was Paine's life. I honor those words with which his will concludes:

"I herewith take my final leave of the world. I have lived an honest and useful life to mankind; my time has been spent in doing good, and I die in perfect composure and resignation to the will of my Creator, God."

In any other this might sound like egotism; but as the last words of a man departing amid the howlings of churches, and the ingratitude of selfish men too timid to do him justice at risk of sharing the hatred which pursued him, they are the noble words of a soul conscious of its integrity—calm under the smile of that Eternal Justice which lifts man above all earthly frowns. They are true words.

My fellow men, these, too, are the times that try men's souls; the times, too, in which souls being tried are found wanting. I am glad that the pious and upright Council of Philadelphia has refused to let Paine's portrait adorn the walls of Independence Hall. I am glad of it, because it is the outspeaking of the truth. Had they admitted it, it would have been a profession of what the country is not up to. For that portrait to be there today would imply that men are not priest-ridden in these days! It would imply that our religion is no longer a thing of words, but of righteous deeds; it would imply that the true Christian of the American church is a genuine man, and not a hypocrite.

Let us not have any glozing over: let the truth, however bad, come out. The brow of Thomas Paine, which throbbed with the common sense of the people, must for many years wear its laurels only in the homes of the men who do not shrink from truth though she wears rags and lives on a crust; the heart from which no lie ever issued must be welcomed, for a long time yet, only at the honest hearthstones of those who will not be pressed into the mixture of cant and pretense which garnishes the world, ere that brow and that heart shall stand confest in high places, to send forth their stern rebukes of wrong and error, and to point men to the nobler day of Truth and Fraternity.

Yet there lies, my brothers, your field of work; it is white for the harvest. It is the field of Common Sense; which means that it is the truth of your mind and mine when, unperverted by error and selfishness, we judge what is right and true. It is the field of Common Justice; which means that sense of humanity, that perception of the wrong done to all when any one is deprived of liberty and love, which fills every heart not preoccupied with prejudice or self-interest. It is the dedication of your whole nature to the rules of virtue, and the untiring pursuit of it even when it leads through evil report, through loss of fortune and friends, to a dungeon or scaffold.

O devotees of Truth, Children of Reason, to you is entrusted the present dignity and the future elevation of man! Preserve your personal independence as you would the apple of your eye. Be true to yourself as the only possible way of being true to others. Learn to labor and to wait. And when you fall in this great warfare of Right with Wrong, of Truth with Error, when you come to look down from the everlasting shores of Light and Truth beyond, no music there will be sweeter than the howlings of the errors you have wounded, or the curses of those who live by deceiving mankind; and you can bear no title to enter there better than to have been reviled and hated by those who oppress and wrong the weak. The poor wise man, forgotten in the city he has saved, is not forgotten in the city of God, which stands here and now and forever, and is built of Truths which endure forever.

The Field

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Thomas Paine anywhere in the world. The pulpit was the gift of the Thomas Paine Memorial Association, custodians of funds that were established by the proceeds of a lecture on Paine given by Robert Ingersoll in Chicago many years ago. A plate is being prepared for the pulpit with the words inscribed, "The world is my country; to do good my religion." At the service of dedication of the Pulpit, Rev. John Brogden, of the Unitarian Church at Urbana, read selections from the writings of Thomas Paine. Professor Charles H. Lyttle, of the Meadville Theological School, in his address, showed that Paine never did desire the extinction of the church, but wanted the church to come to terms with science and to serve "the religion of humanity." E. Burdette Backus, minister of the Unitarian Church at Des Moines and formerly leader of the Chicago Humanist Society, also spoke on the status of Paine in contemporary thought. He showed that the biblical criticism of Paine has been surpassed by later work and that Paine's brand of liberalism is outmoded but that the spirit of the man is of value in the present world. The minister of the Third Unitarian Church preaches annually on Paine and frequently, in announcing a collection, uses Paine's word, "Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom, must, like men, undergo the fatigues of supporting it." Many copies of *The Age of Reason* were distributed in the congregation by Walter E. Cole, a former minister.

In the spring of 1933, the Thomas Paine Memorial Association presented a splendid painting of Paine to the Chicago Historical Society, where it is now hanging. Dr. Preston Bradley, Unitarian minister, of the People's Church, Chicago, gave an eloquent address on that occasion as did Dr. Felix Levy, now head of the American Rabbinical Association.

At a time when the Fascist and Nazi forces of the world are active in their opposition to freedom and democracy, this two hundredth anniversary of Thomas Paine should help to revive among his widespread admirers the devotion to humanity which Thomas Paine so heroically manifested.